





## Communications *Media on Aruba*

Aruba, one of six Dutch islands *officially* known as the Netherlands Antilles, is located in the Caribbean Sea, fifteen miles north of Venezuela.<sup>1</sup>

In 1954 the islands changed from their colonial status to autonomic rule. They became one of three equal partners in the ruling of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The other two members of the partnership are The Netherlands, and Surinam. The six members of the Netherlands Antilles also have their own federal government which is chosen every four years by free elections.<sup>2</sup>

Aruba is nineteen miles long and six miles across its widest point, with a total area of seventy square miles. The population of this island is over 60,000 inhabitants and is still increasing. In spite of Aruba's increasing unemployment rate, the island has one of the highest standards of living in the Caribbean. The two most populated areas are in Oranjestad, the capital, and San Nicolas.<sup>3</sup>

The climatic conditions in Aruba are fairly stable with the average daytime temperature varying only 3.6°F between summer and winter (83.3°F vs. 79.7°F respectively). The island's annual rainfall is only around seventeen inches, making this land very dry. Along with the relatively small annual change in temperature

<sup>1</sup> Investment Factors Netherlands Antilles, Netherlands Antilles Department of Social and Economic Affairs, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Investment Factors, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Investment Factors, p. 7.

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and rainfall, Aruba is cooled *by being in the path of* the constant trade winds.<sup>4</sup> *The result of these three conditions is a rather* pleasant, stable climate.

Even though schooling is not compulsory on Aruba, less than one percent of the children do not attend school. Because of the high attendance rate, illiteracy is negligible. Along with being literate, many members of the population are multilingual because of early instruction in languages and tourism. The educational system is controlled by the Dutch and therefore the language of instruction is also Dutch. This system accents the instruction of foreign languages, and in many schools on the island the study of English begins in the fifth grade and the study of Spanish in the sixth. The most common language used is not the official language, Dutch, but Papiamentu.

Aruba is a small island and because of the convenience of transportation in the form of the automobile, much of the island is accessible to the inhabitants. This accessibility is shown by their mobility within the island. Because of this fact, personal lines of communication or "gossip" must be considered in the discussion of communications media. Therefore this paper will include "gossip" along with formal channels of communications both oral and written. This discussion will also take into consideration that the people are multilingual and are literate in more than language.

From observations in stores principally the Union Store and Uncle Louis's in San Nicolas, it was noted that the Arubians do "gossip". This statement is based on the fact that while a

<sup>4</sup> Investment Factors, pp. 7 and 8.



business transaction is going on *and after it* has been completed, the customer and merchant carried *on a conversation*. Generally the language spoken was Papiamentu. Through a *translator* the subjects of these conversations were elucidated. Along with the usual remarks about the transaction, the parties involved also exchanged local news concerning events and individuals familiar to both. The conversations were not very long and usually terminated a few minutes after the transaction had, but they seemed to be a general practice for customer, merchant relations. This pattern was also seen to exist in the Aruba Store in Santa Cruz and the Upholstery Store in Savaneta. However it was not as prevalent in Oranjestad where the clientele consisted of tourists rather than regular customers.

The pattern of short conversations about news of common interest was also revealed when Arubians who were acquainted met accidentally. The accidental meetings occurred in the street, after religious services (a semi-accidental meeting), and in social situations as when two or more people met, with different engagements, in a place such as De Olde Molen, the Bali Pier restaurant etc.

What was noted about these conversations is that while this frequent, almost continuous pattern was seen in the above situations, the conversations themselves never seemed to be very lengthy. The translated conversations revealed that the conversants knew much if not all of each other's background, therefore long explanations were unnecessary. Thus only the latest news was communicated. An example of the conversations of this type was witnessed at the Bali restaurant. The conver-

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sants were both Aruban males in their mid twenties who had not communicated with each other for five years. The lack of communication stemmed from the fact that both parties had been away from Aruba for about four and a half years, a circumstance disclosed after the conversation. When they met, the conversation was in English, thus they spoke in English, eliminating the need of a translator in this instance. The text of the conversation concerned the parties' present and future plans in Aruba. The conversants did not inquire about what had happened to each other prior to this meeting. Questioning one of the parties after the conversation, about the fact that neither talked about the past, it was learned that he, the participant questioned, had heard the circumstances of the other party's life outside of Aruba when he, the party questioned, had returned to the island approximately six months prior to this meeting, and that there was no need to repeat this information. Thus it would seem that the short duration of conversations is due to the fact that that ongoing "gossip" keeps Arubians well informed about each other.

The formal lines of communication that will be considered are radio and television news broadcasts (oral communications), and newspaper features (written communications). In the line of oral communications the schedules of Radio Kelkbloom and Tele-Aruba will be directly referred to.

Radio Kelkbloom, one of Aruba's radio stations, broadcasts daily, from 7:00 A. M. until 10:00 P. M. on Monday through Saturday, and from 10:00 A. M. until 10:00 P. M. on Sunday. The



Monday through Saturday news schedule which is the same for those days is shown below:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Language</u>
7:15 A.M.	International	15 min.	Papiamentu
9:15 "	Social	"	"
10:15 "	International	"	Dutch
11:00 "	Local	10 min.	Papiamentu
12:15 P.M.	International	15 min.	"
2:00 "	Local	10 min.	"
3:00 "	International	15 min.	Dutch
4:30 "	Local	"	Papiamentu
7:00 "	Local	"	"
8:00 "	Local	"	"

Aside from these broadcasts the schedule also includes on Sunday news orientated programs. One such program is From Week to Week which is a weekly highlight of the international events in the news. Another program, This Week, which also deals with news items, offers an opinion of these items. This program, like From Week to Week is broadcast in Dutch and is monitored from Radio Netherlands. Thus the opinions expressed are those of Radio Netherlands' rather than Radio Kelkbloom's.

Noting the preceding schedule, it can be seen that the broadcast language is not always the same and that social and local news is broadcast in Papiamentu. The use of the spoken Papiamentu seems to take precedence over the official Dutch in matters of more immediate interest to the listeners.

While this station does not broadcast news in English, Voz di Aruba, another station in Aruba has two broadcasts daily from Monday through Saturday. These programs deal with international news.

The other media of oral communications is television.

Tele-Aruba, the only television station on Aruba, is aired from 5:00 until 10:00 P. M. on Monday through Saturday and from 5:00 until 10:45 P. M. on Sunday. Like Radio Keekbloom, Tele-Aruba also has regularly scheduled news broadcasts. The schedule of these is shown below:

<u>Time P.M.</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Language</u>
6:40	Sun.	Public Service	5 min.	Papiamentu
	Thurs.	Public Service	"	"
	Fri.	Protestant Church Cath. Church	"	"
6:45	Sun - Sat.	News	15 min.	"
7:30	Mon - Sat.	Sportsnews	"	"
7:45	Sun - Fri.	News	"	English
9:00	Sun - Sat.	News	"	Dutch

The types of news presented in a broadcast include international and local. The five minute general public service announcements give a listing of the events sponsored by clubs and institutions in Aruba.

The diversity of types of news in a given language seems to reflect the multilingual ability of the viewers. It was discovered by the sales rostra of the Singer Sewing Machine Co. in Oranjestad that the highest sales areas of television sets are concentrated around Oranjestad and San Nicolas, exclusive of purchases from the Lago colony. The people in these areas are, also, by virtue of a well developed shopping areas, more exposed than many other areas on the island to tourists from many countries, who speak many languages. Thus the inhabitants of these areas have more opportunity to use their multilingual skills. Because high consumption and multilingual opportunities occur in the same areas, a correlation seems to exist between these areas and



and the programs telecasted. The correlation is based on the fact that the principal audience dictates the program. In this case only news broadcasts are being considered as the program and the audience is considered to be people who use more than one language frequently. It is conceivable then that this audience because they are the primary consumers and because of their usage of more than one language would accept news of more than one type in one language. Noting the schedule, it is true that more Papiamentu appears than other languages, but the factor considered here is the variation, international and local news, of news in a given language.

For the discussion of written communications, only the newspapers have been considered.

While not the only papers of or on Aruba, The Local, a weekly, and Amigo Di Aruba, a daily paper, seem to be the most popular newspapers. This statement is based on the circulation of these papers. The Local does not have a high subscription rate, but rather relies on sales in stores on the island. It can be purchased in stationary stores in Oranjestad, San Nicolas and in stores in Santa Cruz and Noord. The daily, Amigo Di Aruba, on the other hand depends more on circulation through subscriptions. It is delivered daily to individuals, although it too is sold in stationary stores. Both of these papers are published in Papiamentu. Amigo Di Aruba has more international news than The Local which prints, as its name states, local news.

There are many papers on Aruba, from many different countries, and in many different languages, however the popularity of The Local and Amigo Di Aruba seems to suggest that the people prefer

reading Papiamentu. This opinion is merely the author's opinion since she<sup>has</sup> not mastered the language of Papiamentu and therefore is unable to comment on the papers' editorial views.

The three examples of communications media in Aruba are only a fraction of the media in existence. These are only the general types. Under "gossip" one may explore planned rather than accidental "gossip." Under oral communications one may explore announcements from the various social and religious groups in Aruba and under the heading of written communications one may consider government and club circulars. In short, this discussion of communications media has attempted to show that the media and language in which to convey communications are varied and intricate in Aruba.

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